China/EU alliance 'could be key to low-carbon energy'

Jia Hepeng and Chen Weixiao

12 March 2008 |

Using conventional technologies, China and the EU will be locked in a high-carbon development model

[BEIJING] China and the European Union (EU) can significantly advance low-carbon technologies if they cooperate closely on technological development and market access, according to a new report.

'Interdependencies on Energy and Climate Security for China and Europe', outlines common challenges faced by the China and the EU in dealing with the impact of climate change on energy security — despite differences in their economic development.

The report was presented in Beijing last month (28 February). Contributors include UK think tank Chatham House and the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS).

In order to meet its fast-growing energy demands, China will need to add power generation capacity of 1260 gigawatts by 2030. And despite stable economic development, the countries of the EU will need to generate 862 gigawatts of additional energy by 2030 to replace outdated generation facilities.

If conventional technologies are used, both China and the EU will be locked in a high-carbon development model, the report warns.

But if they work together, the EU and China — which together account for 30 per cent of the world's energy consumption — could create unprecedented opportunities for global transition to low-carbon energy generation, says the report.

China's huge energy demands, low-cost manufacturing, and cheap local technological talent offer a shortcut for the production of clean energy technologies such as wind, solar and clean coal.

China has already produced 80 per cent of the world's energy-saving lamps — many of which are based on technology created in the EU.

The report recommends that EU research bodies establish research and development centres in China and increase the involvement of Chinese expertise in the development of clean energy technology.

It also suggests that the EU builds 'low-carbon economic zones' in China and establishes a joint technology platform to improve energy efficiency in the building sector.

Hu Angang, a leading researcher at Tsinghua University, welcomes the report, saying its recommendation to avoid "high-carbon development lock-in" both for China and EU is especially refreshing.

Pan Jiahua, a key advisor to the Chinese government's climate policies and member of CASS, told SciDev.Net, "Developed countries insist on market approaches — which is too costly for most developing countries — while developing countries want cheap climate-friendly technologies through government cooperation."

"The recommendations on various forms of joint research and development could be a feasible way to transfer technology."

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